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ABSTRACT

The Business Industry and Technical Assistance Center (BITAC) was established in 1986 at Hazard Community College, in Kentucky, to serve as an information and technical assistance center for small business. As the local area began to face layoffs in the coal mining industry, however, the center extended its services in four principal areas: programs, consulting and counseling, workshops, and networking. A number of programs have been developed to help get dislocated workers back into the workforce and assist disadvantaged workers to improve their quality of life, including the 28-week Entrepreneurial Training Program which trains individuals to start, finance, and operate their own small businesses. To date, 90% of all BITAC business starts have succeeded and none has gone bankrupt. Other programs include the Medical Records Processing Program, the Psychiatric Technicians Program, and the Computer Repair Program. Consulting and counseling services are provided to more than 500 clients per year, ranging from information on securing a tax number to developing full business plans. More than 20 workshops on business related topics have been held each year, covering such areas as shoplifting and bad check procedures and cash flow analysis. Finally, a network has been established of more than 82 partners available to work with clients and enhance their chances for success. Since its inception, the center has harnessed federal, state, and local resources to help hundreds of dislocated workers and make an economic difference in the region. (KP)

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Hazard Community College

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BUSINESS INDUSTRY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER
HAZARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE
HAZARD, KENTUCKY
BY ALVIN J. MARROW, PH.D.

Introduction:

His name is John, and he worked as a coal miner for 14 years. Three years ago, he was laid off and could not find a job. One day he saw an advertisement in the local paper describing an entrepreneurial training program offered at Hazard Community College and decided to enroll. At the time of his enrollment, he was living with his wife and two children in subsidized housing and collecting food stamps. Now after completing the program, he is sitting behind a desk in his own equipment rental business. Yes, he owns the business, has a mobile home, and can now support his family, all thanks to the HCC BITAC entrepreneurial training program (Business File 1).

Her name is Lisa, and she is a single parent with one child living in a small rural community in eastern Kentucky where the unemployment rate is nearly 20 percent. As a young parent, she wanted to find an alternative to living off welfare. She wanted to be independent and to take care of herself and her daughter. When she saw an advertisement about an entrepreneurial training program at Hazard Community College, she decided to enroll and take a chance. She had always had an interest in pets; maybe she could learn to be a pet groomer. In just six months, Lisa not only learned to be a pet groomer, but she also started her own business. Now she skillfully baths and grooms poodles and other four-legged friends in her tiny eastern Kentucky pet grooming shop. The pet bathing equipment, hanging rows of leashes, toy pets, and dogie snacks are evidence of her success. She is off the government welfare roll, independent, secure, and has her own business, again thanks to BITAC (Business File 5).

Added to John's and Lisa's successes are a long list of other winners in the manufacturing, wholesale, retail and service sectors. Their business ventures have been in restaurants, wood carving, accounting, auto parts and repair shops, backyard fishing ponds, tee-shirt engraving, printing shops, home-based catering services, clothing stores, small engine repair, and electrical contracting, to name just a few. As of June 1993, BITAC has helped initiate 415 business starts (BITAC Facts and Data), and as one instructor said, "You try to find that spark in people and keep fanning it." (Business File 5).

What is BITAC? BITAC stands for Business Industry and Technical Assistance Center, and it is an award winning economic development program for Hazard Community College. The college, which is located in eastern Kentucky, about 110 miles southeast of Lexington, serves a five-county area of approximately 115,000 people and 1,929 square miles. BITAC was established initially in 1986 to serve as an information

and technical assistance center for small business (Thomas 42), but as the region began to face layoffs in the coal mining industry, the center extended its services -- primarily to create jobs -- in four principle areas: programs, consulting and counseling, workshops, and networking (Program of the Month 2).

Programs:

BITAC has designed a number of programs to get the dislocated workers back into the workforce and to assist disadvantaged workers to improve their quality of life. The Entrepreneurial Training Program is at the top of the list. This program, which is funded primarily through the Kentucky Department of Employment Services (DES), the Eastern Kentucky Cooperative Employment Program (EKCEP), and Joint Training Partnership Act (JTPA) dollars, lasts 28 weeks and is designed to train individuals to start, finance, and operate their own small businesses The program consists of three phases: recruitment and selection, instruction and independent study, and implementation (Program of the Month 1). In the first phase, or the 4-week period for recruitment and selection, the instructor recruits students from a computer list prepared by DES. Any person who is certified by DES as a dislocated worker (JTPA Title III) is eligible, regardless of educational level. Added to eligibility list are disadvantaged workers (JTPA Title IIA) certified by EKCEP. BITAC screens all applicants to identify transferable skills, hobbies, and available family resources that might be useful in determining the best business start (Turner Interview). The second phase, or the instructional and independent study module, consists of 16 weeks of training in self-management, small business, and marketing. The sessions utilize the expertise of local business leaders, community college faculty and staff, and successful graduates of the program. Added to the sessions are up-to-date materials and videos from the center's entrepreneurial library. In addition, consulting and counseling services are provided by the BITAC staff to help students get started on their business plans.. The third module, or the12-week implementation phase, includes intense counseling sessions, the completion of the student's business plan, and the actual launching of the business (Program of the Month 1). Of course, one of the major concerns is getting enough capital to start a business. Business loans are generally available from such sources as the Small Business Administration (SBA), commercial banks, personal savings, loans from friends and family, or the Kentucky River Area Development District (KRADD). Many of these lending sources are willing to take a risk when presented with a worthwhile business plan (Simpson Interview).

Surveys have provided evidence that the typical BITAC business, with the exception of manufacturing, provides an average of 3.8 jobs and creates more than $26,000 in new state and local tax revenue (Program of the Month 1). In addition, almost all business revenue remains in the local community and generates dollars for other

ventures. To date, 90 percent of all BITAC business starts have succeeded, although some have terminated because of relocation or other opportunities, and none has gone bankrupt (Simpson Interview). Thus, the entrepreneurial training program is a "win-win" situation for the new business owner, the local community in its efforts to promote economic development, the state and local community in generating new tax dollars, and the college in impacting and serving the region.

Another program is the Medical Records Processing Program. This program was developed in conjunction with a needs assessment conducted by DES that identified a need in the medical records career field. DES and EKCEP agreed to pay for individuals to participate in the 14 week program that would prepare them for work in a doctor's office, clinic, hospital, nursing home, or medical equipment business. The training -- computer operations, medical terminology, anatomy, insurance processing, receptionist duties, filing -- is conducted by college faculty who gain required continuing education credit and needed equipment, supply, and travel funds for their respective divisions. The Medical Records Processing Program is ongoing and continues to be a success (Program of the Month 2).

One other example is the Psychiatric Technicians Program. This program, funded by JTPA and DES, was designed to train workers for the new Hazard Psychiatric Hospital. The program consists of 400 hours of training in the classroom, laboratory, and clinical settings. The training, which is provided by the college nursing faculty, is offered primarily to dislocated miners and disadvantaged workers who are funded by JTPA or DES dollars, although it is also offered to others who desire to pay the enrollment fee out of their own pockets. The program's success is evidenced by the fact that all 25 of its first graduates were employed within 30 days after graduation. In 1993, , the Psy-Tech Program was honored by winning the Kentucky Jobs Training Partnership Act and the Outstanding Business/Education Partnership Program awards. A second class is currently in session (HCC/BITAC Psychiatric/Technician Program).

Other programs include an three-month intense computer repair program, an eight-week computer career training program, a temporary reassignment and reduced load (BITAC Semester) for full-time faculty members who want to get experience in the world of business, and a cooperative education program for students who want credit for work experience.

Consulting and Counseling:

A second major service of BITAC is providing consulting and counseling services to clients. Each year the center assists more than 500 clients with services ranging from securing a tax number to developing a full business plan that will be marketable to a bank or other lending agency. The center became a member of the

Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) in 1990 and is able to provide clients with a wide variety of resources and consulting assistance from the state's retired executive community. BITAC is also a registered Small Business Information Center (SBIC) and works closely with SBA and KRADD to secure investment capital for clients. As a result of its consulting and counseling services, BITAC has been able to start more than 60 businesses annually for the past five years (Program of the Month 2).

Workshops:

A third area of service for BITAC is in providing workshops. Each year the center provides over 20 workshops covering various business related topics from "Shoplifting and Bad Check Procedures" to "Cash Flow Analysis" (Program of the Month 2). Participation in the workshops has been excellent and encouraging. Since 1992, BITAC has expanded its offerings to include a year-long management institute leading to a training certificate and a number of computer institutes for training small business employees in the basics of computing (Entrepreneur of the Year 15).

In addition to offering local workshops for small businesses, BITAC also offers conferences, seminars, and workshops for government agencies, universities and public schools, and various private businesses throughout the area. These activities are either conducted in the downtown Gorman Education Center in Hazard or at the Hazel Green Academy, 50 miles north of the main Hazard campus, a facility leased by the college for conference and leadership training.

Networking:

The fourth service area for BITAC is networking. The center has established a network of 82 partners who are available to work with clients and enhance their chances for success. In 1990, BITAC was awarded one of three national "Putting America Back to Work" awards by the American Association of Community Colleges for its partnership initiatives (Program of the Month 2).

The center personnel develop additional networking by participating in civic clubs, chambers of commerce, industrial boards, development councils and cabinets, and various other local, state, and federal agencies. Their participation provides an opportunity for the center to develop linkages and to help pave the road for continued economic security in the region.

Summary:

Since its inception in 1986, BITAC has amassed an impressive record. The center has touched the lives of hundreds of dislocated and disadvantages workers. The center has harnessed the resources of local, state, federal, and private agencies to make an economic difference in the region. BITAC has helped people bring their lives back together and has given them the courage to reach for newer and greater horizons. BITAC has made the dreams of many eastern Kentuckians come true.

This paper is an edited version of the presentation made by Alvin J. Marrow, Ph.D., Dean of Academic Affairs at Hazard Community College, in "Forum 37: Collaborating for Rural Economic Development -- an Interstate Model III," at the 74th Annual American Association of Community College Convention in Washington, D.C., April 7, 1994.

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